

New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP): First Synthesis Report

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) is the major employment programme available to people claiming incapacity benefits. It is a voluntary programme that aims to help people with health conditions and disabilities move into sustained employment. A national network of around 65 Job Brokers deliver the programme.

The report synthesizes the findings from early research with NDDP participants, employers and those charged with delivering the programme. It provides an emerging picture of the first 18 months of the nationally extended NDDP. Over the course of the evaluation it is likely that the Job Broker service will continue to evolve, and findings on any changes and on longer-term outcomes will need to await further rounds of data collection.

Principal early findings are:

- Over half of the eligible population had heard of NDDP and/or a Job Broker operating in their local area.
- Between July 2001 and November 2003, 67,983 people or 1.9 per cent of the eligible population had registered with the programme.
- Participants were more likely to be male, younger, on an incapacity benefit for a shorter duration, less likely to have a mental health condition and more likely to have musculo-skeletal problems than the Incapacity Benefit population as a whole.
- Job Brokers were a mix of public, private, and voluntary sector organisations, and they tended to work with 'partner' organisations. In general, they viewed the impact of NDDP on their respective organisations as positive.
- Job Brokers provided, in-house and/or through others, a range of services, including help with looking for work and training. The

actual services provided by individual Job Brokers varied.

- Job Brokers relations with one another were mixed – sometimes seen as collaborative and at other times as competitive. Relations with Jobcentre Plus were seen as central to the success of the programme, and as having improved over time.
- Participants' experiences of, and views on, how Job Brokers could help them gain employment varied. Often it was the participant not the Job Broker's adviser who contacted an employer about a vacancy. For some participants the Job Brokers links with employers were not always as close as they had anticipated.
- Participants tended to have positive views about the service they had received from Job Brokers, for instance, advisers were seen to be well-informed about work related issues. Of those people registering with NDDP up to November 2003, 32 per cent had gained paid work and of these participants 39 per cent has achieved sustained employment.

Key Findings

Accessing NDDP

The three main methods of marketing NDDP to the public were: national marketing; Job Brokers' advertising and promotional campaigns; and indirect and other sources (for example, health and social services, and friends and relatives). As a result over half of the target or eligible population had heard of NDDP and/or a Job Broker operating in their local area. Whilst Job Brokers were contracted to provide their own marketing many

indicated a desire for more national promotion of the programme. Some Job Brokers had concerns about both the Jobcentre Plus mailshots, which did not promote individual Job Broker services, and how well informed some Jobcentre Plus staff were of NDDP and the work of Job Brokers.

There is little evidence of participants actively choosing a Job Broker, as participants seldom made an informed choice about which Job Broker to register with and selection was often based on limited information about which Job Brokers they could approach and the service they offered. Of those who made a choice the main influencing factor was the location of a Job Broker's office. Most participants were positive about how Job Brokers delivered their services: they were generally made to feel welcome, advisers explained matters and listened to them, and advisers were seen to be well-informed about work related issues.

Job Brokers could hold one or more pre-meetings with potential participants before registering them in order to establish that NDDP was a suitable programme for them. There is some evidence from the qualitative research that Job Brokers sought to register the most job ready and to prioritise them once registered. Where a registration did not take place the Job Brokers directed the customers towards more appropriate services.

Registrations

The main reason why people joined the programme was to obtain employment, and the principal reason for not taking part was that they were too unwell. Over the period July 2001 to November 2003 67,983 people had registered with NDDP. Nevertheless, the take-up of the programme was relatively low at 1.9 per cent of the eligible population. The proportion of NDDP registrations varies by region, and take-up was higher for those Job Brokers with previous experience of the NDDP pilots and in areas where Work Focused Interviews were held.

Participants' characteristics

People volunteering for the programme were more likely to be male, younger, on an incapacity benefit for a shorter duration, less likely to have a mental health condition and more likely to have musculo-skeletal problems than the Incapacity Benefit population as a whole. Although three-quarters had a positive attitude towards work and could identify a number of bridges to obtaining work, they faced formidable barriers to getting jobs. The most often mentioned measure that would help participants move into work was if they could return to their original benefit if needed (71 per cent), implying knowledge of the 52 week benefit linking rule was low. Other key 'bridges' were being able to decide the number of hours worked (65 per cent), home-working (57 per cent) and being able to take breaks during the day when required (54 per cent). The main perceived barriers to gaining employment were a belief that there were insufficient suitable job opportunities locally (63 per cent), a feeling that they would not be able to work regularly (50 per cent) and a concern that they faced discrimination on grounds of their disability (47 per cent).

Job Brokers' institutional and working arrangements

The Job Brokers themselves were a mix of private, public and voluntary sector organisations. They varied in the size of area they covered, whether they were 'generalists' or specialised in certain types of disability, and how they organised themselves internally and related to any parent organisation. Job Brokers tended to work with 'partner' organisations, albeit the nature of these relationships varied widely.

In general, Job Brokers perceived the various impacts of NDDP on their own organisations as positive. The introduction of NDDP did lead to new ways of working in the Job Brokers' organisations, in particular to an increased

focus on employment outcomes, it could also raise the profile of the (parent) organisation and lead to expansion of the organisation. However, the outcome-related funding regime (which was amended by the Department in October 2003), whilst receiving general support in principle was criticised by some Job Brokers because, although they specified in their bids the level of outcome payment sought, they had difficulties recovering their costs. In part this was due to the lower than expected take-up of the programme and many participants being harder to place than anticipated by Job Brokers. Lower income was leading to increased pressure on advisers, higher caseloads, cross-subsidisation from other activities, creaming of job ready participants, *etc.* Nevertheless, some Job Broker managers felt outcome funding had been a positive influence on efficiency and effectiveness, and had prompted feelings of greater financial freedom.

Working with participants

Job Brokers did not provide a set menu of services, rather different Job Brokers provided a package of services, which could include basic skills assessments, help with job search, training, work placements, financial advice, *etc.* Overall, a wide range of services was provided in-house and/or by other/partner organisations. Most provided job search related services. However, there was limited use of work placements and Permitted Work. There was also relative little provision of in-work support services.

Participants' views on how Job Brokers could help them find employment varied. Some thought Job Brokers would help them identify jobs, others that the advisers would find the job or contact the employer for them, and others that they could provide job search related support and advice. There were also participants who held more unrealistic expectations, for instance, that Job Brokers had lists of job vacancies. Participants' expectations on the closeness of the links between advisers

and employers were not met. They could be surprised and disappointed by this.

Engaging employers

The qualitative research with employers reveals that, in general, participants secured jobs on the basis of their own efforts rather than due to the intervention of Job Brokers; although Job Brokers could improve participants' chances by, for example, improving job search skills and developing job interview skills. This is notwithstanding that Job Brokers links with employers tended to be vacancy-driven, rather than designed to promote the job broking organisation or NDDP. This might help to explain why half (49 per cent) of surveyed participants thought their Job Brokers were unhelpful on work-related issues. Although participants considered that their involvement with Job Brokers had been very or fairly helpful in respect to 'feeling confident about working' (48 per cent) and 'knowing whether they could work regularly' (47 per cent)

Employers held fairly benign views of employing disabled people.

Working with other organisations

Job Brokers' views on their relationships with other Job Brokers were mixed. In some cases they were described as collaborative, but in other case they were depicted as competitive. The latter was sometimes seen as beneficial and '*friendly*', but at other times as *unhelpful*'.

Relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus are an important aspect of NDDP. The links between them operated at a number of different levels and involved different staff. Initially, relationships had been undermined by feelings of suspicion, but had improved over time. In some instances Job Brokers were able to build upon existing or previous successful contacts for other Jobcentre Plus programmes.

NDDP early outcomes

Of those registering between July 2001 and November 2003, 32 per cent (21,913 people) had found jobs and of these 39 per cent (8,565) had achieved sustained employment up to the end of May 2003.¹ The main factors affecting participants' movements into work were: characteristics of the participants, Job Brokers' characteristics and their activities with participants, and the impact of Jobcentre Plus, that is, Work Focused Interviews. (The influence of other factors, such as the local labour market, will be explored later on in the evaluation.)

Through the provision of in-work support by Job Brokers, the design of the programme recognises that people with a disability or health condition in work can encounter problems in sustaining their employment. Early findings suggest that participants leaving their jobs were more likely to: have a mental health condition; be single with no children; have a job that did not make use of participants' previous skills, that was unrewarding and did not facilitate social activity; have had work problems with their employer; and have a health conditions that caused a problem with work or made the job difficult.

There is evidence that NDDP may be producing 'soft' outcomes, such as improvements in individual's health and self-esteem. Indeed, most surveyed participants (43 per cent) believed that their involvement to date with a Job Broker had helped improved their feelings of well-being and their self-confidence.

Moreover, participants' commitment to finding work had improved since registering with a Job Broker. One month

prior to their registration a third of the participants (33 per cent) were either in work or actively looking for work, but five to six months later this had increased to 71 per cent.

¹ These figures represent Jobcentre Plus authorised Job Broker job entries and do not include Jobcentre Plus NDDP Gateway interview job entries; consequently figures for the programme as a whole will be higher.